A DISCOURSE Concerning the PERIOD OF Humane Life: Whether *Mutable* or *Immutable.*

The Second Edition Corrected.

By the Author of *The Duty of Man laid down in Expreſs Words of Scripture.*

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To the Honourable *Colledge* of *Physitians* at *London*.

Generous Gentlemen,

THat I presume to prefix your great Name to so mean a Book, proceeds not from any confidence I have of its value; but from the nature of the Discourse, which your excellent Profession is so much concerned in. For I must say, that since I could under-

stand the Debate, I have thought their opinion, who maintain the Period *of every Mans Life to be unalterably fixed by an absolute Decree, does endanger your Profession so much, that the truth is, if it be true, you may seek out some new World for your Practice; for here you should be only like the Idol-Gods, who could neither do good nor evil.*

This the excellent Jo. Beverovicius *did prudently*

prudently foresee, and purely endeavored to satisfie both himself and others, by asking the advice of the Learned men of his age.

But that the Period of Humane Life *may be both extended and shortned, common experience does sufficiently attest. How many have been hurried to their Graves by the unskilfulness of* Empericks; *and are there not multitudes also that can witness, you have been (un-*

der God) the cause their Lives have been prolonged.

Gentlemen, I know you can expect no Panegyrick from such an unfit person as I acknowledge my self to be. And methinks I also hear all men say, that that is a business only for a Homer to perform. If the meanness of this Present be censured by some, yet I know you are more generous, especially since the be-

beſtowing of a more valuable and ſignal evidence of reſpect, is only impeded by the inability of,

Honored Gentlemen,

Your moſt devoted

Servant.

THE PREFACE

Reader,

THE *following Discourse is of so small bulk, that a* Preface *may seem as needless and ridiculous as an* Index. *In some few hours it may be perused, and then both the design of the Author and of the Book may be known. It may be thou desirest to know what was the occasion of the following Discourse. But I know not if I be obliged to answer this and such like idle questions; yet to satisfie thy curiosity, know, that the Author was unhappily engaged to converse with a Society of men, who frequently debated this and such like queries; and mostly he was opposed by the greater part, as maintaining an unreasonable position. Whether their charge be true or false, is a thing better determined by others unconcerned, than either by them or me. I*

know very well their clamorous calumnies and reproaches, which since I cannot shun, I shall endeavor to slight, as indeed unworthy to be regarded.

If men of good consideration dislike any thing in the Discourse, I promise them, upon Information I shall either endeavor to satisfie them, or to rest satisfied with what they say. Nay further, if there be any Line in it inconsistent with Piety and Religion, freely reject it; for I perswade thee (if the Author knew any such) he would burn the Book for its sake.

But I hope upon trial there shall be found no harsh notion in it to offend the most squeamish conscience. For the opinion I have rejected is, in my judgment inconsistent with the Divine Goodness and Holiness, repugnant to the freedom of Humane Nature, and destructive of all lawful means for the preservation of a mans life. While as that sentiment I embrace, begets in mens minds, noble and generous conceptions to promote real Piety and Religion, and to shun all manner of wickedness and intemperance; upon the account that Piety is the means to prolong our lives, and wickedness the cause of our short lives. And that this is no cheat or delusion, the wisest of men hath left upon record, Pro. 11. 19.

19. As righteouſneſs tendeth to Life, ſo he that purſueth evil, purſueth it to his own death. *This brings to my memory the Pſalmiſts advice, with which I ſhall conclude*; What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips from ſpeaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and purſue it. But the wicked and deceitful man ſhall not live out half his days.

O F

OF THE PERIOD OF Humane Life:

JOB 14. 5, 6.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.

Turn from him that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh, as an hireling, his day.

THis excellent Book of *Job* repreſents to us a plain and unqueſtionable inſtance of the various ſucceſſes all Humane actions are liable to, and of the promiſcuous adminiſtration of Divine Providence to particular perſons.

sons. Here we may read of *Job*'s happy and flourishing condition, that *he was the greatest of all the men of the East*; and of his low and afflicted state, poor even to a Proverb; and in a condition that only pleaded pity and compassion; and how again *the Lord blessed the latter end of* Job *more than his beginning*.

From this various administration of Providence, men have taken occasion to make divers inferences. The scoffing Atheist hath from thence wickedly concluded, that God hath no care of Humane Affairs. If God (say these scoffers) had any care of this World, he would never suffer those men who have corrupted their ways by Treachery and Deceit, to prosper and enjoy an affluence of all worldly delights; whereas the vertuous and godly man, who takes heed to his ways, lest he sin, and who throughout the whole

course

course of his life hath carefully studied to *keep a conscience void of offence towards God and Man*, is notwithstanding *a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief*; as *plagued all the day long, and chastened every Morning, and hath waters of a full Cup wrung out to him.* If God (say they) concerned himself with Humane Affairs, he would never suffer *the Tabernacles of Robbers to prosper*, and the House of the Upright to be ruined and destroyed.

This is without all contradiction a great stumbling-block and offence to the Blind Atheist; and hath even been a sad trial to the best of Gods people. *Wherefore does the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very Treacherously?* Was a question *Jeremy* could hardly at first resolve. And we find *Job* and the Prophet *Habakkuk* very much puzled with it; and the

Psalmist

Pſalmiſt plainly confeſſeth, that *his feet were almoſt gone*, and that *his ſteps had well nigh ſlipt, when he ſaw the proſperity of the wicked*, Pſal. 73.

To ſee bad men proſpering in their wicked purpoſes and undertakings, and good men unſucceſsful and fruſtrated in their juſt attempts, has been none of the leaſt Topicks the *Epicurean* Atheiſts have made uſe of, in their exempting this World from the Divine Rule and Dominion. It was this ſingle conſideration that made *Cato* (who was once a Preacher of Providence; how Orthodox, I enquire not) accuſe the Dominion and Government of the gods, of inſtability and unjuſtneſs, that *Cæſar* who tyrannically invaded the Rights of the Commonwealth of *Rome*, ſhould be ſucceſsful in ſo unjuſt attempts; and *Pompey* put to the worſt, and overthrown in the lawful defence of his Country:

try: this ſtumbled him exceedingly. 'Tis true, ſome few of the Learned and Sober Heathens did not thus raſhly fall foul upon Providence; but very wiſely inferred the being of a future State, where the vertuous ſhall be rewarded, and the vitious puniſhed. And thoſe Holy men in Scripture, who did *fret becauſe of the proſperity of the wicked*, quickly perceived their folly and error, and that the wicked were only fed like Sheep for the Slaughter; and as the Poet excellently expreſſeth it, *tolluntur in altum ut lapſu graviore ruant.*

Job's Friends, though they did not directly fall foul upon the Divine Providence, yet it is evident they were of opinion, that God would never have afflicted *Job* with ſuch ſad calamities, if he had been upright and ſincere. *Remember* (ſaith *Eliphaz*) *who ever periſhed being innocent? Or where*

where were the Righteous cut off? ch. 4. 7. *Bildad* tells *Job*, *If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee*, ch. 8. 6. To both these *Zophar* succeeds with a charge as grievous and bitter, *For thou hast said my Doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes: But O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee*, ch. 11. *v.* 4, 5.

These were the Cordials *Job*'s Friends afforded him, while as his afflicted condition pleaded pity from his Friends. These accusations were heavy; but he saw it was needless to tell them, that God might destroy the perfect as well as the wicked; and although he would not plead *not guilty*, for then he confesseth *his own lips should prove him perverse*; yet he humbly conceived, that it was a dangerous principle to conclude love or hatred from any such outward dispensations.

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Therefore finding all his intreaties rejected, and his plea's for his own defence ſlighted; he is at length forced to beg their ſilence, deſiring far rather to plead his cauſe with his Maker, who could diſcern his ſincerity; and therefore having ordered his cauſe, *ch.* 13. 18. and taken an exact and accurate examination of his former ways, he begins his pleadings for a mitigation of his preſent calamity, from *v.* 23. which he continues till interrupted by *Eliphas*, ch. 15. and amongſt the many arguments he urgeth, that taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds prefixed to men is not the ſmalleſt: *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs. Turn from him that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh as an hireling his day.*

These words being the ground of the following Discourse, it is but reasonable I should spend a little time in their explanation.

Seeing his days are determined, &c. The word which our Translators render *seeing*, is in the Original אם, which some Expositors think is used by way of query, thus, *If his days be determined?* But the Context seems to warrant our Vulgar Translation, and there is no doubt, but it is very emphatick, for it contains an implicit affirmation, a phrase very ordinary, when the thing for its certainty is confessed and acknowledged. But let us suppose, that the words should be rendred by way of query, yet there are two doubts that must be removed, else their quarrelling with our Translation is vain and impertinent. It seems to be very evident, that it has then been a received opinion, that the days

of

of men are determined; else *Job* had never made use of this argument, in his pleadings for a cessation from trouble. 2. If *Job* had indeed doubted, that mans days were *determined*, it was no wise nor rational plea, especially since he was pleading with God, who knew whether it were so or not; and since he might have made use of indubitable Topicks. But I pass by this debate as trivial.

His days, &c. It is debated by some, why *Job* makes use of the third person, and not of the first. The reason some give is this, because the third person used for the first, denotes contempt and modesty; and therefore *Job* in his low state is pleased thus to abase himself, especially since pleading with his Maker. But this conjecture is not fully satisfactory, for *Job* in several of his other pleas, makes use of the first person; which methinks he would not

have done, if he had made uſe of the third perſon upon the account of the former conſideration; therefore from the promiſcuous uſurpation of the perſons, we may eaſily conjecture, that when the argument he brings does in a more peculiar manner reach his own private condition, then he makes uſe of the firſt perſon: an inſtance of this we have *ch.* 13. 23, 24. *&c.* But now this argument taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds ſet to men, is a general one, which all men as well as he might plead; therefore he ſpeaketh in the third perſon, yet always eying his own condition. The like inſtance we find in the beginning of this Chapter, *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.* Here he ſpeaks in the third perſon, and not in the firſt; for to be of *few days*, and *full of trouble*, is the character of every man.

Few

Few and evil (says *Jacob* to *Pharaoh*) *have the days of the years of my life been*, Gen. 47. 9.

Are determined, &c. This word in the Original properly signifieth to *dig*, or *cut thorow*; here it is to be understood metaphorically; because God doth as exactly know the number of mens days, as if the most accurate search were made. 'Tis true, in all humane determinations, it is reasonable that consultation proceed. Some space must intervene betwixt their knowing of a thing and their determinations about it. I confess, it is disputed, whether the Humane Will be of it self a knowing faculty? or if it must follow in its choice the dictates of the intellect? I will not dispute this now; but there is truth in that general Maxim, *ignoti nulla cupido*. But to fancy that there is any such priority between the Divine knowledg and volition, is a gross mistake, irreconcilable with

the Infinite and Eternal perfections of God: who *uno actu & ictu*, (as they ſpeak) comprehendeth and willeth all future Events.

The number of his Months are with thee, &c. This Phraſe holds out theſe two things: *Firſt*, the Exactneſs and Infiniteneſs of the Divine knowledg; and *Secondly* the Divine rule and dominion. *Firſt*, it holds out the Divine knowledg to be Infinite and Exact, *The number of his months are with thee.* That is, thou art a God whoſe knowledg reacheth the ſmalleſt portion of our time, even to months and days; thou alone knoweſt all thoſe circumſtances; and to know the particular portion of days allowed to every man, does certainly require an infinite and exact knowledge. I will not curiouſly enquire, what truth there is in the pretended diabolical predictions of future Events; and whether Star-gazers from the Conjunctions,

junctions, and contrary Aſpects Of Celeſtial Bodies, can foretell the future number of the days and months of terreſtial and inferior Sublunary beings: a paſſing view of this I will have occaſion to take afterwards; at preſent we reſt ſatisfied with this, that an exact and comprehenſive knowledg of our days and months, is only the prerogative of him who holds our lives in being; the pretended knowledg any Creature boaſteth of, is conjectural and uncertain, if not (as frequently it is) fictitious, unleſs when the Divine wiſdom for ſome ſecret, and to us unknown ends, reveals to his creatures ſuch future Events. But *Secondly*, the Phraſe holds out the Divine Rule and Dominion, *The number of his months are with thee*: that is, they are in thy power, thou may'ſt either prolong or ſhorten the days of Men: and I think the meaning of this whole

verſe is comprehended under theſe two heads, which I ſhall afterwards diſcourſe of at more length.

Thou haſt appointed his bounds, &c. It is not Fate or Fortune, but the wiſe God who appoints to every Man his time; now the bounds ſet to Men may be conſidered under a two-fold notion. *Firſt*, As it ſignifies that common and ordinary Period which the God of Nature has ſetled, which Men by the common courſe of Nature may fulfill, if no accidental circumſtance hinder: and it ſeems the Pſalmiſt only underſtands this common term of Humane Life, *Pſal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are Threeſcore years and Ten, and if by reaſon of Strength they be fourſcore*; &c. or *Secondly*, It may be underſtood in a more ſtrict ſenſe, as it is taken for the laſt moment of every individual and particular perſon; and of both theſe I ſhall more fully diſcourſe

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afterwards and ſhow, that the words ſeem to refer to the common term of Humane Life; or if they mean this particular term, in what ſenſe they are to be underſtood *determined*, *appointed*, &c.

Theſe and ſuch like condeſcending Phraſes, have been moſt unhappily uſed, and ſadly miſunderſtood in the Schools. Some men no ſooner read in Scripture of Gods determining or appointing, but they inſtantly conclude a phyſical previous neceſſitating act, which inevitably and irreſiſtibly determines Men: and this kind of determination they plead for in all caſes: ſo that Men even in their vitious actions are irreſiſtibly determined to do ſo. I know no opinion which has rendered the reformed Church more odious than this: would to God I could ſay the Cenſure is cauſeleſs, and that I were forced to apologize, for ſaying our Divines have erred

erred in this caſe. But alas the opinion is grown ſtrong, and not long ſince it was not much leſs than Hereſie to condemn it: and even to this day it is the ſtudy of ſome Teachers, to inſtill it into the hearts of their Hearers. For the correcting of this ſowre opinion, I ſhall have occaſion to add ſome things in this following diſcourſe; now I ſhall deſire it to be conſidered, that while we ſpeak of the Divine determinations, appointment,&c. we ſpeak of things our knowledg cannot reach, the beſt conceptions we can frame to our ſelves of the Divine volitions, are dangerous and imperfect; our capacities in this lapſed ſtate are more narrow than we are aware of: and although they were raiſed to a higher pitch, yet we can never comprehend his way of working, who in all his ways is unſearchable. 'Tis truly ſad to ſee the contending World ſo ſerious

ous and reſtleſs in digging thoſe deeps that are unfathomable; it were to be wiſhed that Men did not found their pretended knowledg of the Divine volitions, on the baſis of their own ſilly volitions and did not argue from what we find in our ſelves to be the ſame in God. 'Tis true the Holy Spirit hath condeſcended to expreſs things ſuitable to our Underſtanding and mean capacities, therefore we read in Scripture of the Divine determinations, appointments, *&c.* but yet to abuſe ſuch condeſcending expreſſions, and to imagine that there were really ſuch purpoſes, and volitions in God as theſe we perceive in our ſelves: this were a hainous crime, pray let us ſatisfie our ſelves with this, that God in an eminent and tranſcending manner doth theſe things, which we cannot do without willing, decreeing, *&c.*

That

That he cannot paſs, or as others render it, *and he ſhall not paſs*, which Phraſe is not to be underſtood, as if the particular Period of every Mans life were ſo fatally fixed that he can neither ſhorten nor prolong it, for this is contrary to many clear Texts of Scripture, as ſhall afterwards fully appear: but by this Phraſe, we are to underſtand the common term of Humane Life, which is not ſo mutable as the particular, nor yet altogether ſo that it cannot be altered; for God has ſtill reſerved in his own power the ſhortening and prolonging of it. And further, we muſt not apprehend that the particular terms of Humane Beings is ſo mutable, that God knows them not, and cannot foretel the preciſe Period of every Mans Life, or that the Divine Counſel concerning things Future is mutable; no ſure, God has declared the contrary. *I am God,*

God, and there is none like me, (ſaith the Almighty.) *declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done; ſaying, my Counſel muſt ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure, Iſa.* 46. 9. Two things there be which occaſion men to change their purpoſes and reſolutions. 1. Their want of Power to Execute them. 2. Their finite and ſhallow Knowledg, which cannot foreſee thoſe future circumſtances which render their Deſigns ineffectual. But now there is no difficulty that can poſe the Almighty; *with him all things are poſſible*, it is the Prophets argument, *the Lord of Hoſts hath purpoſed, who ſhall diſanull it? his hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back? Iſa.* 24. 17. And further there is no circumſtance or condition that lyes in the dark, and unſeen to him, whoſe knowledg is infinite, and who equally com-

comprehends things paſt, preſent and to come. Therefore is it that men cannot paſs theſe bounds prefixed by the Divine foreknowledg: But of this afterwards.

Turn from him, &c. It is queried whether *Job* here petitioneth a withdrawing of Gods ſupporting preſence, and a ceſſation by death, or a ceſſation from the affliction and trouble he lay under. There be Three things that plead for the former Interpretation. 1. Becauſe the word חדל placed abſolutely, ſignifieth to ceaſe by death, 1 *Sam.* 2. 5. *and they that were hungry ceaſed, i. e.* died. 2. Becauſe the ſupporting hand of Providence being removed, men return to the Duſt. *Thou hideſt thy face, they are troubled, thou takeſt away their Breath, they dye, and return to their Duſt*, *Pſal.* 104. 29. 3. It is not inconſiſtent with *Jobs* former deſires, *Chap.* 3. and 6. *Why died I not from*

from the Womb? why did I not give up the Ghoſt when I came out of the Belly? For now ſhould I have lien [*ſtill*] *and been* [*quiet*;] *I ſhould have* [*ſlept*,] *then had I been at* [*reſt*:] *O that I might have my requeſt, even that it would pleaſe God to deſtroy me!*

That the Phraſe can never admit the former gloſs evidently appears from the words immediately following, for if *Job* had been pleading for death, why is that reaſon added *that he might accompliſh his day?* It is only then a ceſſation from his grievous affliction that he ſo earneſtly intreateth, as if he had ſaid, Lord, thy afflicting hand is heavy, and what am I but weak Duſt, not able to bear thy heavy Chaſtiſements? my Soul is overburdened with grief, and wilt thou ſet thy terrors before me to affright me? hath not poor man in this lapſed ſtate, Troops of miſeries attending him,

him, from which he may expect no freedom till Mortality be ſwallowed up in Life? And are not his few days labor and ſorrow, pain and affliction? And wilt thou to thoſe inſeparable evils, ſuperadd a burthen of pain more grievous and inſufferable? O do not meaſure out ſo diſmal a Condition to thy ſilly Creature! Make me not the object of thy direful vengeance, but in the midſt of wrath remember Mercy. Art thou not Goodneſs it ſelf, and far more compaſſionate than the moſt tender parent? And ſhall it be ſaid thou haſt meaſured out ſo acute torments to vex thy poor Creature? I confeſs Perfection is not the thing I plead; yet may not I ſay, it is not for my iniquity, nor for my ſin, that thou haſt afflicted me? And let this Conſideration alſo prevail with thee, that my untender friends ſadly miſtake thy deſign in afflicting me; they conclude

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it is for ſome ſecret heinous crime, that thy judgements are upon me: O that thou wouldſt turn from thy wrath, that I may enjoy ſome reſt, before I go whence I ſhall not return?

This phraſe *turn from him*, is ſometimes taken in a very bad ſenſe. Thus we find the wicked ſadly characterized, as a people who deſire God to depart from them; but as it is uttered by the people of God under the preſſure of afflictions, it implies no more but a ſerious deſire that God would be pleaſed to remove that burden. Now in ſuch innocent petitions there appeareth no crime; for it is certain, that afflictions *ſimply* conſidered, are grievous even to the beſt of Mankind: *there is no affliction* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *for the preſent that is joyous but grievous.* 'Tis true impatience under affliction is an exceſs which no excuſe whatſo-

ever can pardon: there are some persons of such hasty complexions, that they rise in passion against God if they meet with the least affliction; just like that wretched man who said, *this evil is of the Lord why should we wait any longer upon him?* But those petitions of the Faithful in holy writ, although at the first view they seem to be peremptory and absolute yet they are truly qualified and submissive, and at the most, only express the harmless resentments of innocent nature, that cannot but express how contrary afflictions are to it.

That he may rest; ut quiescat sc. paululum, that his affliction being removed he may yet enjoy a little space to solace himself, till he accomplish his day. I will purposely decline the answer of that querie, Whether it is lawful to wish death when our condition is charged with a surplusage of calamity;

lamity; for the brevity I design will not suffer me to survey the difficulties of that case, only in the general I shall add two things. 1. If the affliction be violent, fierce, and seemingly durable, rendering us uncapable of exercising any duty; I question not but common reason will suggest to every sober man, that in that case Death is more eligible than Life. Yet 2. since we are ignorant what God designs to us, by sending us such afflictions, it is our part to submit to the Lords will, and say, *Good is the will of the Lord.* Thus although we may comparatively and submissively wish Death upon the account of some acute trials, yet it is never lawful to be peremptory and absolute in such desires; for frequently the happy event makes men conclude that *it was good for them they were afflicted.*

Rest, &c. Methinks the very sound of this word is full of ra-

viſhing ſweetneſs and pleaſure, and yet to thoſe who are ſtated in a condition of Woe and Miſery, it is bitter and harſh; as the moſt raviſhing and pleaſant Muſick is in the Ear of him who is ſad: thoſe who never taſted the honey-comb, know not its ſweetneſs: the men who have been always drudges and ſlaves, have no diſcerning what Liberty is; and thoſe who from their birth have been accuſtomed to pain, know not their miſery ſo ſenſibly. But to have once enjoyed bleſſings, and on a ſudden to be deprived of them, not only the unexpected change, but alſo their former happineſs, adds to their miſery, and makes their condition more unſufferable. If man had been created to toil and labor, *his eating of bread in the ſweat of his face*, had been no curſe: but to have been placed in a bleſſed and happy ſtate, and by his folly to be hurled into a

ſtate

ſtate of miſery and pain, that compleats his calamity, and makes him ſenſible, how miſerable a thing it is to have been happy.

This ſingle conſideration ſeems to add very much to *Jobs* miſery, his condition was once more than ordinary happy; and the amiſſion of the comforts he formerly enjoyed, makes him pathetically cry out, *O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; but now* (as he ſadly complains) *they that are younger than I, have me in deriſion.*

If *Job* in this ſtate of woe had been perſwaded of the certain change of his condition, *and that his latter end ſhould be more bleſſed than his beginning*, the expected hopes of this had ſerved to allay and mitigate his ſorrow, and to render his caſe more ſufferable and eaſie. It is the hops of reſt, that puts ſtrength in the wearied

traveller; it was the expected reward and assurance of a future blessedness and better resurrection, which made those Worthies *Heb.* 11. so cheerfully undergo suffering. What the happiness of the Saints rest is, I am not able to represent, it being so far above any thing we can in this imperfect state conceive or imagine. The advantages that attend our present tranquility and rest, are many and great, which to enumerate would be prolix and tedious: but if from that, we should frame to our selves an *Idea* of that Celestial Rest, how imperfect would it be? any Rest we enjoy here, is uncertain: an unthought-of causality may impair it, but the Rest that remains for the people of God is everlasting, there is no fear of losing it: Heaven is a place free from trouble, and there is nothing that can imbitter that pleasant state.

Phi-

Philoſophers have a ſaying, *that the end of Motion is Reſt*; this is indeed true of all thoſe motions and trials the ſervants of God meet with; the way to the Kingdom is ſpread over with thiſtles; *thorow many tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* but thoſe Waves of affliction will quickly over; and when the day breaks, theſe ſhadows will flee away. This Winter will ſoon be paſt, and *the ſinging of the Birds will come*; and Chriſtians, who by faith and patience continue in well-doing, ſhall ere be long be placed in thoſe manſions of Reſt, that are in *Emanuels* land.

Alas, how inſenſible do we remain under the enjoyment of our outward comforts! when we are bleſſed with food, liberty, and health, we are but ſenſibly ſtupid and ignorant, what is the value of thoſe mercies: but if hunger and

want begin to pinch us, if our former liberty be hedged in, if ſickneſs and pain ſeize upon us, then we begin to gather ſome ſenſe, and we accuſe our ſelves for our ingratitude to God.

Till he ſhall accompliſh as an Hireling his day: for the better underſtanding of this ſimilitude, I ſhall in four particulars compare the days of man with the days of an Hireling, and in each of them make application to *Jobs* caſe. 1. The days of an Hireling, denotes a time, ſet, prefixed and limited for the performance of ſome particular piece of ſervice; and are not the days of man alſo allotted him for to do his maſters buſineſs? We were not born to be idle and negligent, ſure God had ſome greater deſign in the Creation of man than this: now this particular quadrates very well with *Jobs* caſe, and ſeems to make the meaning of *Jobs* words

to

to run thus; Lord, thou haſt given me a being, and appointed me a work to accompliſh: but alas while I am thus excruciated with horror and pain, I am unfitted for thy ſervice, the ſurpluſage of miſery meaſured out to me, diſinables me to go about thy work, be entreated therefore O merciful Father to turn from thy diſpleaſure, remove the preſent heavy calamity I am overburdened with; that I may yet accompliſh the remainder of my time in thy work and ſervice. 2. This ſet and fixed day of the Hireling is full of pain, labour and toil; he is (poor wretch) both late and early at work, and ſeldom has he any intervalls of reſt, unleſs his Maſter be more than ordinary gentle and benign; and when he is thus indulged a little eaſe, he muſt not with the ſluggard ſay, *O ſi hoc eſſet laborare*, he muſt to his work again, for upon this depends his pay-

payment; no Wages is the reſult of not working; and in ſome caſes ſtripes and whipping is the fruit of negligence. And what is Mans Life? At the beſt ſtate it is but ſorrow and trouble, till mortality be ſwallowed up in Life. Our pleaſures (upon which we put the higheſt value) are either purchaſed, or accompanied with pain and labor. If we be in a proſperous ſtate, our minds are either diſtracted with care to make it more proſperous; or with fears puzled and perplexed, leſt it be overclouded, and if we be in a low and adverſe ſtate, we grieve and repine; nay knowledg, the moſt excellent of earthly pleaſures, is yet in the judgment of the wiſeſt of men, but vexation of ſpirit; *For in much Wiſdom there is much Grief, and he that encreaſeth Knowledg encreaſeth Sorrow.* The life of Man is not unfitly compared to *Ezekiels* Roll, which was full

full of woes. If one miſery or woe paſſeth, behold another cometh, as one Wave ſucceeds another. And by all theſe calamities we may learn what an evil Sin is, the fruit of which are all thoſe calamities we meet with; *in the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat thy Bread till thou return unto the Ground.* And upon this account *Job* may be ſuppoſed to plead with God thus; Lord, is not my time at beſt but lamentable and miſerable? And wilt thou ſuperadd to this inevitable miſery, a ſurpluſage of pain and affliction? O deal kindly with thy Servant who is devoted to thy fear, *Turn from me that I may reſt till I ſhall accompliſh as an Hireling my day. Thirdly*, True it is that the Hirelings day is but Labor and Pain; yet the brevity and ſhortneſs thereof makes him regard it the leſs. It is but a day, and that will quickly be over and gone; and what

what is the Life of Man? It is but as a hand-bredth of a ſmall extenſion; or like to a paſſing ſhadow, which we ſcarce ſooner perceive than it vaniſheth. *Man that is Born of a Woman is of few days, he cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down:* his decaying is within ſome few minutes of his budding; as the Poet ſpeaketh of Roſes, *& dum naſcuntur conſenuiſſe Roſas.* Now from this reaſon *Job* may be ſuppoſed to argue thus; Lord, thou knoweſt how frail and brittle I am, and if thou contend thus with me, how quickly ſhall I return to the Duſt. I beſeech thee conſider that my time is however but ſhort, and let thy goodneſs appear in removing thy ſtroke away from me, for I am conſumed by the blow of thine hand; *O ſpare me that I may recover ſtrength before I go hence, and be no more. Fourthly,* The Reſt and Wages the Hireling expecteth, makes

makes the accompliſhing of his day more eaſie and tolerable. The word rendred accompliſh, ſignifieth to will and delight in a thing earneſtly; *donec optata veniat dies.* 'Tis a day wiſhed and longed for, and much delighted in when it comes. And indeed the ſtrength of the compariſon ſeems to lye in this, which makes the meaning of *Jobs* words to be this; Lord, now my trouble and pain excruciats and torments me, and my life is more wearisome to me than the Hirelings day can be to him; therefore turn away thy wrath from me, that in the finiſhing of my courſe I may be as jovial and cheerful, as the Hireling is when his day is accompliſhed: and thus I have done with the Explanation of theſe words.

The next thing I deſigned in this undertaking, is to enquire how the days of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined; and whe-

whether the Period of every Mans Life were ſo fixed and bounded, that by his care, good managery, and uſe of the means, it cannot be extended; nor ſhortned by his negligence, intemperance, or expoſing of himſelf to Famine, Sword, or Plague, it is very certain from this plain Text of Scripture, that the days of every Mans Life are determined; but the manner how, is left unexplained: and this we do not learn from Scripture. And it were to be wiſhed that our curioſity would forbear any enquiry into things that are hid: but alas our inclinations are ſo wicked and perverſe, that *nitimur in vetitum*, we are always bent and eager in our enquiries after things of a myſterious alloy; and God knows how miſerably ſome men have miſtaken in their enquiries after a ſolution of the preſent doubt: and if I could promiſe to my ſelf to rectifie thoſe huge

huge miſtakes ſome men have fallen into, this would be a ſufficient juſtification of my preſent undertaking.

But in order to the unfolding of this doubt, I ſhall promiſe four things which will contribute to the better underſtanding of it.

Firſt, There is no doubt that every Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*; this is a warfare from which there is no diſcharge: *what Man is he that liveth and ſhall not ſee Death?* As to this, the Prince and Peaſant ſtand upon even terms, and as the wiſe man tells us, the rich and poor meet together: there is no juſtling in the Grave for precedency. I confeſs it were not worth the pains to conſider the trivial inſtances, taken from the Tranſlation of *Enoch* and *Elias*, to infringe this poſition. For firſt, we are not to debate what God may do, he has a Soveraignty over his

his Creatures, and muſt not be called to give a reaſon of his actions; all whoſe ways are tracts of wiſdom and goodneſs. *Secondly*, We know nothing of the manner of their Tranſlation: he who will poſitively ſay, that they did not undergo that which is equivalent to death, will ſay more than he can prove. I am apt to believe that no ſober man will ſay, that they entred their Heavenly Habitation with their unrefined bodies; no more than thoſe who riſe at the ſound of the laſt Trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, are carried into Heaven without any change.

Secondly, It is alſo unqueſtionable, that Sin introduced this Period to every Mans Life; the primitive threatning runs thus, *in the day thou eateſt thou ſhalt dye.* And the Apoſtle hath as plainly expreſt it as it can be, *wherefore as by one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin, and ſo Death*

Death paſſed upon all Men for that all have ſinned, *Rom.* 4:,12. where it is plain, that Death is a puniſhment inflicted for Sin, ſo that if man had never ſinned, we have no reaſon to think he ſhould have died. I confeſs without Revelation, we could never have gueſſed this to be the cauſe of Death. The Heathen Philoſophers were exceedingly confuſed in their notions concerning the origine of Sin, and the cauſe of Death: many of them thought that Death was a natural accident, originally appurtenant to Humane Nature. And indeed if Revelation had not declared the contrary, I had been fully ſatisfied, that Death had been no other thing but ſuch a natural accident; but it is ſtrange that any man that has converſed with ſacred writ, ſhould be of this opinion. And yet we find, the *Pelagians* of old were great ſticklers for it: hence is it that the ancient

cient Fathers and Councils have condemned it with a Curse. In the *Milevitan* Council *Can.* 2. we read thus *Placuit, ut quicunque dicit,* Adam *primum hominem mortalem factum, ita ut sive peccaret, sive non peccaret, moreretur in corpore, hoc est, de corpore exiret, non peccati merito sed necessitate naturæ, anathema sit.* In after-ages the *Scotists* (the most subtil of all Scholastick writers) inclined much to this opinion, against whom the *Thomists* (their irreconcilable Enemies) took up the cudgels: amongst modern writers the seemingly rational *Socinians*, have owned this groundless conceit. But I cannot stay to debate this at length, only in brief, if Death had been natural to man in the state of Innocency, it behoved to have been because of these following reasons.

1. Because *Adams* natural constitution implied mortality; the Materials of his constitution were not

not so amicable as, to entertain a lasting amity and friendship. 2. It was the primitive precept, *be fruitful and multiply*; now it is plain that procreation includes mortality in its notion; and farther it seems to be unconceivable how this little Map of Earth should have contained a numerous multiplying and never-dying offspring. 13. Humane Nature in the state of Innocency did stand in need of Meat and Drink, as is plain from *Gen.* 1. 29. now the end of eating and drinking is not only to hold up, but to repair the decays of our Bodies, which would suddenly return to dust, if they were not thus renewed; and strengthened. 14. If Death were only the effect of sin, and the Devil were called a Murderer from the beginning, because of his tempting our first parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, it will follow, that since Christ came to take away the sins of the World,

and to destroy the works of the Devil, that he also took away the wages of sin, which is Death; than which nothing is more contrary to daily experience. 5. Immortality seems to be entailed only to the state of future Glory, *where Corruption shall put on Incorruption, and Mortality shall be swallowed up in life:* and *then there shall be no more death*, *Rev.* 21. 4. These are the most material reasons I can find for the proof of this opinion, in answer to which I shall desire the Five following considerations may be weighed.

Consid. 1. It is not to be doubted that the eternal wisdom, furnished our first parents with all these accomplishments their specifick nature could suffer: the signatures of Wisdom and Goodness were legible in the lowest and least regarded piece of the creation; but in Man in a more eminent manner conspicuous. It is almost impossible

ble for us in this fallen ſtate, to conceive what thoſe endowments were, with which his innocent condition was bleſſed; we have no reaſon to think that there was any jar or diſagreement amongſt his faculties, or oppoſition and fight of one quality with another. It was mans diſobedience that diſturbed the whole univerſe, and diſordered every part of it; while he was at peace with his Maker, he enjoyed a ſerene condition, and needed not fear any hurt either External or Internal: then all the parts of his Body entertained a ſweet harmony, and there could be nothing except Sin that ſhould have made any failure in his conſtitution, or made a ſeparation between his Soul and Body. But Sin having entred the World, every part of the univerſe changed its face, and Man who was Heavens favorite in his firſt mould, is now condemned *to eat his bread in the ſweat of his*

face till he return unto the dust.
This is all that we can learn from Revelation concerning the introduction of Death; to suppose any other account of it, were to give up our selves to the dictates of our extravagant fancies: and farther, it is very unreasonable to infer mans mortality from his constitution, and because he is earthly; unless we think it also rational, that perfected Bodies in the state of Glory are not Bodies, or that they are even there mortal; both which seem to be plainly oppose to Scripture.

Consid. 2. The Phrase Immortal, may fall under a double notion: for *First*, sometimes it is taken absolutely, implying a being most perfect, which had no beginning, and can have no end; and in this sense, Immortality is solely the prerogative of our Maker, and can never be attributed to any creature. *Secondly*, Sometimes it

is

is taken Conditionally: and so under various considerations it may be attributed either, *First*, To perfected Saints who are stated in Glory, where the primitive Image lost by mans fall, is renewed and perfected; and of those our Saviour in the Gospel of *Luke* tells us, *that they can dye no more*, *Luke* 20. 36. or *Secondly*, to our first parents in the State of Innocency. For so long as they remained obedient to the Laws of Heaven, Immortality was entailed upon their nature: for the tenor of the primitive threatning is, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt dye*: where temporal Death seems to be threatned, which had been idle and vain if men had died although they had never eaten the forbidden Fruit. I know some men think that Sin only laid a necessary obligation upon men to dye, and provoked God to remove that Supernatural and Superadded qua-

lity and gift, which preſerved them from Death. With ſuch ſort of men I have no great quarrel, although I think that God could as eaſily have made mans conſtitution ſo laſting, and the conſtituent parts of his fabrick ſo harmonious, that he ſhould have never dyed if he had not ſinned, as to create a ſuperadded being to preſerve him ſafe. For reaſon would plead, that that ſuperadded gift required another, and ſo *in infinitum.*

But farther, 'tis very unreaſonable to infer mans corruption from that precept, *be fruitful and multiply*; for although in ſome ſenſe *generatio unius eſt alterius corruptio*, yet the ſtate of being, even ſince the fall, (to which that axiom has only reſpect) is not ſo brittle, as that the production of the Child infers the deſtruction of the Parent.

Neither doth that curious query concerning the place for that ſuppoſed

poſed numerous off-ſpring, carry with it more reaſon; for *Firſt*, It is not to be doubted, but the Wiſe Creator who gave being to Man, knew well enough how to provide an Habitation for his off-ſpring. *Secondly*, the Precepts be *Fruitful and Multiply*, carries with it a Limitation, *and repleniſh the Earth*; ſo that we can never well conclude from it, that Generation ſhould have continued after the repleniſhing of the Earth. But *Thirdly*, What ſuppoſe this little Map of Earth had not been able to contain ſo numerous an off-ſpring, could not God have Tranſlated Man after he had lived ſome ſpace upon the Earth to ſome better Habitation, as he did with *Enoch* and *Elijah*?

Conſid. 3. Though Man in the ſtate of Innocency ſtood in need of Meat and Drink, yet his nutriment was not noxious and hurtful to him, as now it is. It was for

for Mans disobedience that a Curse was upon the ground, before which there was no fear of hurt from the Fruit of the Trees, and the Herbs of the Field; (which were the only things granted to Men for Food in that state.) And indeed if we but consider that even in this fallen state, there is a huge difference between the Lives of those who live upon wholsome Food, and observe a moderate Diet; and of those who are careless in their Diet, and feed upon Husks; we cannot but think the former Consideration reasonable, especially since that blessed state excluded all manner of excess.

Consid. 4. Great and Manifold are the blessed benefits that are conferred upon Mankind, upon the account of his Redeemer: now Man, who was at odds with his Maker upon the account of his Rebellion, is again taken into favor; and the disobedient World

is

is reconciled unto God. And although the being of sin is not quite abolished, yet the Curse is removed, and Death is not properly now a punishment.

Consid. 5. Immortality conjoyned with a state of perfect felicity, is reserved for Heavens favourites: In the state of Innocency our first Parents were liable to Death if they rebelled, but the Saints above are confirmed in their Blessed state: and as our Lord Christ tells us, *they can dye no more*. But this much may suffice for the removing the former doubts.

The *Third* thing I premise is, that 'tis very usual in Scripture, as it is in all Languages, to put the Whole sometimes in the Part: thus Man is said to dye, to cease, to be Mortal, because the Body is liable to Corruption, and not that the whole Man, or all the Essential constituent parts cease. And thus when we dispute con-

concerning the Period of every Mans Life, we must not foolishly fancy that a Period is put to the being of the Soul, but only that its union with the body is dissolved: otherwise a dismal stroke would be given to our Religion, and what would become of the vertuous? I confess it is very hard and difficult to demonstrate the immortality of our Souls by natural reason: 'Tis true, by reason I may prove that our Natures are spiritual, and that we elicite acts which are beyond the power of matter; but yet we could never be fully ascertained that there is a Life after this; if Revelation had not plainly discovered it. The Heathen Philosophers very wisely entertained some hopes of a Life after this; upon moral arguments taken from the goodness of God, and his justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments: but alas how doubtful

full were their hopes, and with how much hesitation did they discourse of it! But by the help of Revelation, these doubts are fully removed, and we now know that there is a Resurrection from the dead, and that the Souls of Believers at death go immediately into glory.

Fourthly, Because the explication of terms is very necessary for the unfolding of doubts; I shall consider the twofold notion and acception, the Period of Humane Life is lyable to. 1. Sometimes it is taken in a large sense, for that common and ordinary Period which the Author of our natures hath setled, which Men by the common course of nature arrive at: Now many learned Men upon good grounds think that this is the determined bounds mentioned in Scripture. 2. Sometimes it is taken for the last moment of every Mans Life at whatever

ever time it happeneth; whether 1. In the Beginning of Mans days; or 2. In the midst of his days; thus the Psalmist prays, that *God would not cut him off in the midst of his days.* or 3. When Men come to be of a good old Age and full of years, as it is said of *Abraham, he died in a good old Age, an Old Man and full of years, Gen.* 25. 8.

That there is such a common Period of Humane Life seems to be certain and indubitable: we evidently enough perceive that Men in the Age and place wherein we live, exceed not (unless rarely) the bounds fixed upon *Psal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are Three-score years and Ten, and if by reason of more strength they be Four-score years, &c.* And if we shall descend to the Consideration of other Animals and Vegetables, we will find it true enough that the individuals of every specifick nature,

nature, have a common Period which doth not ſenſibly alter; but where there is a manifeſt difference of the climate, temperature, and ſoil. Again it is very unqueſtionable that this common Period hath not been equally extended in all Ages and places. 'Tis true for many hundred years by-paſt it hath ſuffered very little alteration, but ſure from the beginning it was not ſo, nor can we upon any good ground be aſcertained that it will continue the ſame that it is now, till the end of all fleſh come. Though I will not poſitive affirm that Mens Lives will be inſenſibly ſhortened, till they become uncapable for procreation.

But to determine what hath been the common Period of Humane Life in by paſt-ages of the World, is a *Theme* very difficult and hard: for 1. Although from *Abrahams* time till this preſent Age it hath altered but little or nothing,

as

as we may collect from *Gen.* 15. 13. and 16. where a generation is equalled to an Hundred years (as the Verſes collated make it evident;) yet before the Flood and in ſome few Ages following it, this common Term was not concluded within the ſhort bounds it is now; although then it was indeed exceedingly mutable. Before the fatal Flood we read not of any who lived not above ſeven Hundred years, (unleſs *Abel* who was murdered, and *Enoch* whom God took to himſelf:) nor of any who exceeded nine Hundred ſixty and nine years. Now the common Period not being ſo denominated from ſome few particular inſtances, but from what happens to the moſt of Mankind in every Age who dye a natural death, we may ſuppoſe that Eight Hundred years was the common Period before the Flood. But then after the Flood, the mutability of this com-

mon Period is conſpicuous; for in the next age after the Flood, it was cut ſhort two hundred years; and in the next three ſucceeding generations it was abridged to four hundred years; and in the three ſucceeding ages to the former it was reduced to two hundred years; and in *Abrahams* time it ſeems not to have been extended to an hundred years.

In reducing the Life of Mankind into ſhorter bounds now than it was in the infancy of the World, the Divine wiſdom and goodneſs do very plainly appear: for 1. Although it is true that Sin was the cauſe of Miſery, yet it is manifeſt that as Men began to multiply, ſo they became more corrupted; and as the Earth was repleniſhed with Men, ſo with multiplyed Miſeries; and thoſe not only particular but common. War and bloodſhed, ſlavery and toil, pains and diſeaſes, were in the firſt ages of the World

very rare and singular; now these are ordinary and common: and is it not then a great mercy that the days of our life are few, since so full of evils? But 2. If Men lived as long now as in the first ages of the World, a Land would not be able to contain its inhabitants: and this is a far greater inconvenience and disadvantage, than the shortening the lease of our beings can be supposed to be. In the first ages of the World, the lives of Men were extended, that the Earth might be replenished; and it is very plain, that this common Period was shortened according as Man multiplyed. I confess God threatens to destroy the inhabitants of a Land for their transgressions; it was because Men had corrupted themselves, that God brought a Flood of waters upon the World: and yet the Divine Justice was accompanied with astonishing goodness; for he did not

not (as justly he might have) instantly cut off that perverse generation, but he gave them the space of an Hundred and Twenty years to repent. *Yet* (saith God) *his days shall be an Hundred and Twenty years, Gen. 6. 3.* That is, although this be a perverse and corrupt generation, yet because Man is but flesh, I will give him this time to repent of his wickedness; and if notwithstanding he will not after such warning mend his manners, I will destroy him. I know many learned Men think that God here only threatens to shorten the common Period of Mens lives, and that it should be contracted within the bounds of an Hundred and twenty years: but this exposition is not agreeable to the experiences of some ages next following the Flood, in which Men lived much longer than an Hundred and Twenty years.

But they ſay, God uſes not to anticipate his time in bringing judgments upon a nation or people: to which I anſwer, it is very true; but methinks men have no ground to think, that in the preſent caſe God anticipates the time in bringing judgements upon them; for we cannot think that *Noah* was compleat five Hundred years old, when God threatned to deſtroy the World. And indeed any Man who is but a little acquainted with the Jewiſh cuſtom of reckoning of years, knows how uſual it is with them, to name the greater part of any thing for the whole. *St. Auſtin* is ſo clear in this, I'le rather ſet it down in his words than my own: *Intelligendum eſt hoc Deum dixiſſe, cum circa finem quingentorum annorum eſſet* Noah. i. e. *quadragintos octoginta vitæ annos ageret, quos more ſuo Scriptura quingentos vocat; nomine totius maximam partem plerumque ſignifi-*

significans. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 15. c. 24.

Thus much I have ſpoken of the common Period of Humane Life, in reſpect of the ages of the World. I ſhall now add a little concerning its changeableneſs, in reſpect of places: and I confeſs in this caſe it is ſo variable, that it is a hard matter to pitch upon particulars; only in the general it is certain, that this common Period is not the ſame in all places: in a temperat climate this common term is extended; but where there is an exceſs of heat, or an unconſtancy of the weather in thoſe places this common Period is ſhortned.

But paſſing this I come now to conſider the particular Period of every mans life: there be two ways it is commonly taken. 1. As it implies the diſunion of the parts, by reaſon of the exceſs of ſome one quality or other: or 2.

as it implies the Period of Humane Life whatever way it is occaſioned, without any relation either to the defect, or exceſs of any quality: and thus the learned *Epiſcopius* ſtates the caſe in his firſt Epiſtle to *Jo. Beverovicius*. But to make this yet more plain, I ſhall conſider that text, 1. *Sam.* 26. 10. *As the Lord liveth the Lord ſhall ſmite him, or his day ſhall come to dye, or he ſhall deſcend into battel and periſh.* Though *David* was anointed King, yet he durſt not ſtretch forth his hand againſt the Lords anointed; neither would he permit *Abiſhai*, (who inconſiderately offered (to do it; knowing none could do ſo and be guiltleſs. Therefore he comforts and ſolaces himſelf with this conſideration, that God ſhould rid him of *Saul* one of theſe three ways. 1. By *ſmiting him* with ſome diſeaſe; and now to what a numberleſs number of diſeaſes are our frail

frail natures incident: variety of maladies prey upon frail man, and millions of miseries attend him; *the Pestilence walketh at noon-day*, and the Air which he breaths may blow out the spark of his life. 2. *Or his day will come*; that is, or he will dye a natural Death; now *Saul* was well-stricken in years, and he knew that by the course of nature he could not live long. 3. *Or he shall descend into battel and perish*: That is, if some disease cut him not off, or if his day come not, yet he shall be exposed to a violent Death, *or he shall descend into battel*. Sometime a violent Death is purely casual; thus it was with *those eighteen upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell*, *Luke* 13. 4. Sometimes it is only improperly casual, as when one of two equally exposed to danger is only killed: and sometimes it is only and properly violent, such was *Sauls* death, such was *Achitophels* and *Hamans*.

The way to this discourse in hand being thus far cleared, I shall now prosecute the design of it in this method. 1. I shall set down those erroneous opinions into which some men have unhappily fallen in their enquiry for satisfaction in the present case. 2. I shall lay down the two common opinions that offer fairest for solving this doubt. 3. I shall attempt a full and satisfactory answer: and lastly I shall conclude with some reflections upon the whole discourse.

I begin with the first to give an account of those erroneous sentiments some men have unhappily embraced in their enquiry for satisfaction in this matter. And that I may shun tediousness, I shall reduce them to the two following heads. 1. Some have foolishly imagined that the Period of Humane Life is fatal and necessary. 2. Others upon the contrary extream

tream, have as groundlesly thought that it is altogether fortuitous and casual.

Amongst those who ascribe every thing to the dispensation of a sure and inevitable destiny, the *Stoicks* have been always reckoned the chiefest combatants. It is well known that those stupid and senseless Philosophers did teach, that all effects were necessarily produced by the natural order and *series* of causes, which were from the outgoings of Eternity inseperably chained together; so that neither Humane industry, nor the Divine power could alter what such a conjunction of causes was to produce.

That Humane Industry, care, and good menagery, cannot alter the decree of Fate, the *Stoick* moralist *Seneca* very fairly confesseth.

Fatis

Fatis agimur, cedite fatis:
Non ſolicitæ poſſunt curæ
Mutare rati ſtamina fuſi.
Seneca in Oedip.

The ſame *Seneca* alſo affirms that the ſupreme being is ſo ſtrictly tyed to the *Sempeternal ſeries* and order of Cauſes, that he muſt follow, but cannot gain-ſay what is thus eſtabliſhed. *Quicquid eſt quod nos ſic vivere juſſit, ſic mori, eadem neceſſitate Deos alligat, irrevocabilis humana ac Divina pariter curſus vehit.* Sen. lib. de provid. 5.

There are two very dangerous Authors of great name and fame, who amongſt many other bad opinions, have recalled this Stoical Dream, which was long ſince rejected, the one is the Famous Mr. *Hobs*; the other the ſubtil Author of that Book, entituled *Tractatus Theologico policitus*: Both which I may perhaps have occaſion

ſion to examine more particularly.

But if all things were thus eſtabliſhed by a fatal neceſſity, ſound reaſon would ſuggeſt to ſoberMen, that it were a needleſs thing for the Sick to call for the Phyſitians aid. And indeed *Cicero* very ingeniouſly confeſſeth this: *Si fatum tibi eſt ex hoc morbo convaleſcere, ſive tu medicum adhibueris, ſive non adhibueris, convaleſces. -----Si fatum tibi eſt non convaleſcere, ſive medicum adhibueris, ſivè non convaleſces, & alterutrum fatum eſt, medicum ergo adhibere nihil valet.* Cic. lib. de fato. And although *Seneca* thinks he has fallen upon a very good anſwer, yet it is truly never a whit better. *Cum ſanitas* (inquit) *videatur de fato debetur & medico, quia ad nos beneficium fati per hujus manus venit,* lib. 2. nat. cap. 35. By which means the Phyſitian is as fatally determined to preſcribe the Cure, as the Sick

Sick Mans recovery is Deſtinated.

The Ages in which theſe Men lived being dark and blind, we ought as much to pity their caſe, as correct and reprehend them. It is our happineſs that we are not left to the conduct of natural reaſon; and would God our thankful acknowledgments were anſwerable to the greatneſs of this Bleſſing. I ſhall not need to ſtand in rejecting this Dream, I think the hazards this ſpeculation hath expoſed ſome of its favorites to, will be forcible enough to affright others from embracing it. I remember I have read of ſome whom this conceit had ſo far diſtracted, that they did caſt away their Swords and other weapons when their Enemies approached: Saying, If it be our Fate to dye, to keep our Weapons will never preſerve us from Death. 'Tis alſo reported of the deluded *Mahumetans*,

humetans, that in Battel they take courage from this, that they are no ſooner Born, than Fate Seals upon their Foreheads, how long they ſhall Live, and what death they ſhall dye. Alas who would not pitty Men thus infatuated and bewitched! Surely, as St. *Auguſtin* excellently ſpeaks, *Si cor tuum non eſſet fatuum, non crederes fatum*, Tract. 37. in Joh.

Next the *Stoick* ſtand the Star-gazers and Aſtrologers, who attribute the ſhortneſs or extenſion of our Lives to the bad or benign Aſpect and Conjunction of the Stars in the time of our Nativity. Now although I deny not that the Heavens have an influence upon inferior things, yet ſurely this ſecret and occult dominion Star-gazers plead for, is ſo manifeſtly croſs to reaſon and dayly experiences, that no man in his wit will affirm it. The Prophet hath long ſince adviſed us, *not to be diſmayed at the*

ſigns

ſigns of Heaven; adding, the *Heathens they are diſmayed at them*, *Jer.* 10. 2. As if it had been only peculiar to the Heathen part of the World, who were ignorant of Gods Providence, to believe the vain predictions of Aſtrologers. *Babylon* was upbraided for her truſting Aſtrologers, Star-gazers, and monthly Prognoſticators. *Iſa.* 47. 13. Theſe Men confidently preſumed to foretell the time of Mens Death, and the eaſily deceived multitude gave a ready aſſent to whatever they ſpake: So eaſily a matter it is to impoſe any thing upon the belief of the vulgar. The *Paraſter* as fooliſhly pretendeth, that God hath ſealed upon every Mans Hand how long he ſhall live, and that obſerving men (as they would have us believe they are) can underſtand this by the lines and draughts in the palm of the hand. And for proof of this they aledg. *Job* 37. 7. Where

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it is ſaid, *he ſealeth up the hand of every Man, that all Men may know his work.* But from this place no ſuch thing can be collected: for *Elihu* is there taken up in expreſſing the greatneſs of Gods works, and the Divine power in commanding the Snow and the Rain, ſmall and great, to be on the Earth; and he addeth, *he ſealeth up the hand of every Man.* That is, when Snow and Rain are upon the Earth, Men cannot labor and toil; their hand is ſealed up, they cannot work.

Epicurus and his followers could never be reconciled to this opinion, but yet the account they give of this matter is every whit as extravagant and irrational: they being equally unhappy in the account they give of the beginning and Period of Beings.

The account theſe Men give of the original of Beings is ſo incredible, that no rational Man can have any

any temptation to believe it; but this belongs not to the present discourse. I shall therefore only consider what they say of the Period of Beings; and briefly their opinion is, that it is no more but the casual and fortuitous separation of those particles of Matter that were united by a happy chance and hit.

This error is of an Old Date, and had long ere now past prescription, if it had not been so suitable to the humors of bad Men. The *Saducees*, whose Religion it was to contradict the *Pharisees*, were very great sticklers for this Dream: Some Men have confined the Divine providence to the Stars, and plucked out sublunary Beings from his immediate Rule and Dominion. *Cicero* could not be perswaded that God had any knowledg of things contingently future. Some to mend the matter, confess God may know the

gene-

general kinds of things, but they will not allow that he knows every particular. For this they think is inconsistent with the immutability of the Deity: But others have been more illiberal in their concessions, thinking it enough if they grant that God hath a care of Mankind, although he never regard lesser matters: and that,

Curat magna Deus, fortunæ parva relinquit.

By means of these wild conceits this Error has proceeded from bad to worse, yet very few of the old Philosophers, or any other rank of men; (Atheists those Anomalus births excepted) had ever that confidence in impiety, to say with the *Epicureans*, that the World is perfectly left to its own fortuitous and casual resolutions, or that I may express it in their Poets own phrase.

Sive nihil positum est, sed sors incerta vagatur,
Fertque refertque vices, & habet mortalia casum.

That the Period of every mans life is not so casual and fortuitous as these men imagine, may be made evident by clear testimonies from Scripture concerning the particular Providence whereby God takes care of every particular thing in the World. But because I will have occasion to consider this afterwards, I shall now add only an instance or two from Scripture, whereby it may appear that the most seemingly casual Periods of men are ordered by an infinite Wisdom, and fall under the Divine Rule and Dominion. And first the man-slayer, who killeth his Neighbor unawars, seems to be as casual a business as can be: and yet we may read how far the

the Divine providence is concerned in this particular, . *Exod.* 21. 13. But farther, one of *Epicurus* Disciples would readily conclude that *Ahabs* death was a piece of chance, and governed by no Supreme power. It was but an Archer's drawing his Bow at a venture, which by chance killed *Ahab*. But the word of truth informs us, that by this means the prophecy 1 *Kings*, 21. 19. was fulfilled: and that it came not to pass without the Divine providence, who rules among the children of Men.

And now I have done with the two erroneous extreams which some men have inconsideratly run to for shelter: the next thing I premised was to lay down the two common opinions that offer fair for removing the difficulty; but I must say (for the thing is palpable,) that I am now only to give the two former rejected opinions of the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans*

dreſſed up in better apparel, and much refined from the impure dregs of Heatheniſm: as,

1. Some run to the abſolute and inconditionate Decrees of God, and tell us, that from the out-goings of Eternity, previous to the Divine conſideration of circumſtances in which men are to be placed, God has ſo abſolutely determined the Period of every mans life, that it can neither be lengthned nor extended by care and diligence; nor ſhortned by intemperance, Sword or Plague.

2. Others who ſee the inconveniences and abſurdities that follow upon the granting that opinion to be true, are induced to believe that the Period of every mans life is ordinarily mutable; and may be both extended and ſhortned: yet ſtill they grant that God may, as it ſeems good to him, either extend or ſhorten it.

There-

There are four very considerable particulars that seem to strengthen the first opinion. *First*, There are many plain places of Scripture that conclude the days of every man to be bounded by the Divine determination. *Secondly*, There are many examples in Scripture which shew that the Period of every Mans Life is from the out-goings of Eternity, set and bounded in by the Divine will. *Thirdly*, It is a common opinion that the futurition of all things depends upon the Divine will, antecedently to which, things are only possible: and therefore, *Fourthly*, we can never give a rational and satisfying account, how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the *Basis* of the sure absolute Decree.

Upon the other hand those who plead for the mutability of the

Period of every Mans Life, endeavor to remove the fore-named doubt, and to ſhew the great inconveniences it is lyable to: That it quite evacuates the uſe of the means, and encourages men to expoſe themſelves to any danger; *&c.* as I ſhall endeavor to make appear afterwards.

And now I come to the chief thing I aimed at in this undertaking, *viz.* To attempt a ſatisfying anſwer of the preſent doubt, in the proſecution of which intendment I ſhall obſerve this Method. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavor to ſhew how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined. *Secondly*, I ſhall ſhew in what ſenſe it is not determined: and *Thirdly*, how it is mutable and may be extended or ſhortned. I begin with the firſt, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined: and I ſhall endeavor to do this in the two following particulars.

1. The

1. The Period of every mans Life is so far determined that it is not without a Period. To determine, signifieth properly to set bounds or limits to any thing. Now since *it is appointed for all men once to dye*, every mans life is enclosed and bounded within a certain number of years. And I must add, that if I be not very much mistaken, this is the genuine sense of the most, if not of all, those places of Scripture that express the determination of Mans days: and indeed *Jobs* words *seeing his days are determined, &c.* seem to mean no other thing but this; and in this sense it is unquestionable that God has *appointed our bounds which we cannot pass.*

But 2. the Period of every particular Mans Life is determined in respect of the Divine prescience. Now because this is a very considerable particular, and, as I told in the explaining of the text, that

which was intended by *Job* when he ſays, *the number of his months is with thee*; I ſhall therefore endeavor to make out this truth by the plaineſt and moſt convincing evidence that can be.

In order to this I ſhall ſhew that God hath a perfect comprehenſion of all things, paſt, preſent, or to come; and by conſequence fore-knows the Period of every Mans Life. *Secondly*, I ſhall prove this by plain evidence from Scriptural Examples. *Thirdly*, I ſhall make it appear, that it is ſolely the prerogative of our Maker to know the Period of every Mans Life. And *laſtly*, I ſhall anſwer the moſt Material objections and doubts that are brought againſt it.

Firſt, that God hath a perfect comprehenſion of all things paſt, preſent, and to come, is ſo reaſonable a principle of natural Religion, that it hath been generally owned

owned by the wiſeſt and moſt learned Heathen. And thoſe impious wretches who at every turn take the name of God in vain, in atteſting him in the truth of what ſometimes themſelves know is falſe, ſufficiently imply that they believe Gods Infinite knowledg. Beſides the truth of this is plainly held out in Scripture; it was to this City of refuge *Peter* did flee when his love was ſeemingly called in queſtion; *Lord* (ſays he) *Thou knoweſt all things, John* 21. 16. And the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* makes uſe of this Topick to induce us to circumſpection, *all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb.* 4. 13. And God himſelf appeals to the infinity of his knowledg in the demonſtration of his Deity, and challengeth the Idol-Gods *to produce their cauſe; and ſhew what ſhall happen that the latter end of things*

may

may be known, Isa. 41. 21. 22. The Psalmist upbraids the Idol-Gods, in that they have eyes and see not: but he always comforts himself with this consideration, that the God in whom he trusts does behold his condition, all which instances make it undoubtable that God hath an infinite cognizance, and that nothing can be hid from his eyes, who equally beholds things past, present, and to come.

Now if it be so plain and evident that God hath such an Infinite knowledg, no Man can reasonably doubt that God knows the Period of every Mans Life; but if any shall ask how is it that God knows certainly the Period of Humane Life, I answer, that it is a very bold and fruitless enquiry, which concerns not us to know; his understanding is infinite, and shall silly Man think to comprehend and measure it by his finite know-

knowledg? The Pſalmiſt modeſtly acknowledgeth that *ſuch knowledg is too wonderful for him, it is high* (ſays he) *I cannot attain unto it, Pſal.* 139. 6. And elſewhere he tells us, it is only bold Atheiſts who ask, *How doth God know, and is there knowledg in the moſt high?*

I confeſs the Schoolmen (as they are called) weary themſelves with ſuch vain Diſputes, and they are as peremptory in determining the manner of Gods knowledg of future things, as if they had proved their aſſertions with Mathematical demonſtrations. Some of them tell us, that things future are really preſent with God in Eternity; which methinks is a very noble Paradox. Others run to the Divine decree, and make it the *Baſis* of the Divine knowledg. Others tell us that God in contemplating his own eſſence ſees all the repreſentations and *Ideas* of future things; and

and therefore knows them certainly. We might add many other conjectures, but these may let us know how vainly curious such wits are: but that which may satisfie any sober enquirer is this, that God is Infinite in knowledg, and therefore knows certainly the Period of every Mans Life, it being truly future.

The Second thing I premised was to prove that God knows the Period of Humane Life by examples from Scripture. Now I think this will need but little proof, since the predictions concerning the Period of persons are so many and plain; so many Hundred years foretold, and so punctually fulfilled without a failure in a title. The death of *Eli*'s Two Sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas* was foretold. 1 *Sam.* 2. 24. And punctually fulfilled, as we may read, *chap.* 4. 11. both the manner and place of *Jezebels* death was foretold, *and the Dogs shall eat* Jezebel

Jezebel *in the Portion of* Jezreel, *and there ſhall be none to bury her*, 2 *King* 9. 10. Which prediction was fulfilled without a failure in any circumſtances, as we read in the cloſe of that Chapter. But the moſt remarkable inſtances are thoſe manifold predictions concerning the death of Holy Jeſus. *All the Prophets* (as the Apoſtle obſerveth *Act.* 3.) *have foretold that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer*; they have condeſcended upon the manner of his ſuffering, upon the time, and upon the circumſtances relating to it. The Pſalmiſt in a figurative Speech, (a very uſual way of expreſſing things amongſt the Prophets) ſpeaks of his being pierced: ſo doth the Prophet *Zechariah*, *and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced*, *Zech.* 12. 10. *Daniel* did punctually ſpeak of the time. *And after Threeſcore and Two weeks ſhall* Meſſiah *be cut off, but not for himſelf*, *Dan.* 9. 26.

But

But farther God doth not only know the actual, but also the possible bounds of every Mans Life; that is, God doth know that a Period should have been put to the days of many Men, if they had not by their hearty repentance and Devout Prayers prevented its lash. It was King *Hezekia's* Prayer to God that extended his Life Fifteen years, for the message which God did send to *Hezekiah* was this; *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt dye and not live.* But he having prayed to God gets this return; *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years, Isa.* 38. 5. From which it is plain, that God knew that a Period should have been then put to his days, if his Prayer had not prevented it. It was the people of *Ninevehs* repentance that prevented the threatned judgment that should have put a Period

od to their lives. Which Method if the old World had obſerved, they had prevented that Fatal Flood in which they were drowned.

Thirdly, That it is only the prerogative of God Almighty to know the Period of every Mans Life will be eaſily granted. For thoſe who deny Gods univerſal cognizance, will never attribute it to any creature: and thoſe who do acknowledg the infinity of the Divine knowledg, will never ſay it belongs to the creature. The only thing that we are to conſider are theſe pretenſions to a foreknowledg of things which the Heathen world bragged of, but this Plea is eaſily removed. For 1. in thoſe dark ages of the World it was an eaſie thing to impoſe upon the faith of the vulgar, who in all ages have been very credulous and apt to be thus deceived. *Secondly*, It is well known that there pre-

pretended predictions were very *enigmatical* and dubious. *Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere posse*, was a Problem, rather than a Prophecy, which might have concluded both ways. *Thirdly*, The most part of their pretended predictions were only guesses and conjectures, which for the most part were false and groundless; yet *Fourthly*, I do not deny but God may for ends known to himself reveal the Period of particular persons, when, and to whom he thinks fit. It is therefore singly the property of God Almighty who grasps all times, and who can never be impeached for giving a wrong divination, to know the Period of every Mans Life.

In the last place I come to consider those Material doubts and objections this principle may be urged with. As 1. It is hardly credible that God doth certainly know the Period of Humane Life,

it being only contingently future: this objection *Cicero* could not answer, therefore being perswaded that some things were contingently future, he thought God could not know such things. But the difficulty is not so great as to make us deny God hath perfect knowledg of things contingently future. For 1. The light of nature may teach us that we must not reject what is plain, because we cannot comprehend what is obscure. That there is in man a rational Soul is beyond doubt; and yet how irreconcilable are the opinions of learned men about its original, whether it be by seminal production, or by immediate creation. Again the union of Soul and Body is a very mysterious riddle, and the most ingenious *hypothesis* has been confessed to be unsatisfactory; and yet no man was ever so far infatuated as to deny that in man there is a Soul and

Body. In like manner, what al[l] Humane Reason cannot recon[cile] the Divine knowledg with [the] contingency of actions? yet may it not rest satisfied with this, that God knows all contingencies bec[ause] his understanding is infinite. And indeed the predictions in Scripture are so remarkable and plain evidences that God knows all things, that now it cannot be reasonably questioned. But suppose Revelation had taught us nothing of this, yet we might by natural principles know that God is the most perfect being that can be imagined, and therefore of Infinite comprehension; that he is our Maker, and therefore must know all the intrigues of his creatures.

But *secondly*, the Divine foreknowledg is not the cause of things (for otherwise criminal actions which do not escape his eye, should be caused by him who cannot tempt any man to sin) which

is

is impossible: if God should reveal to me that *Titius* were certainly to do such a thing the next day, my foreknowledg does not necessitate *Titius* to do that act: so that upon the one hand as the foreknowledg of it hath no influence upon the manner of its production, nor crosseth the Humane liberty; for the Divine foreknowledg is not the cause why things exist, but it supposeth the existence of things: so upon the other hand the contingency of the Period of Humane Life does not infer, that it cannot be certainly known by an infinite understanding who grasps all things and seasons.

But the great difficulty is, how the Divine foreknowledg can be reconciled with the Divine promises, commands, comminations and prohibitions: how it can consist with the Divine wisdom and Goodness, to threaten men with shortness of life if they con-

tinue wicked and rebellious; and to promiſe length of days if men will obey his commandments, while as he well knows that the wicked man will continue in his wickedneſs, and be filthy ſtill, and that the vertuous and good man will perſevere in well doing.

I confeſs, this is a very great difficulty, and hath induced many learned men to doubt if God knows things contingently future, not that they would impeach any of the Divine perfections, or derogate from the infinity of his knowledg; but only they think that the nature of things contingently future, is ſuch that they cannot be known; as it is no diminution from Omnipotency, to ſay things impoſſible, or which imply a contradiction, fall not under its object.

But yet ſince Scripture hath ſo clearly revealed to us the Divine foreknowledg of future actions, methinks he is very raſh and inconſi-

considerate that doubts it: it is a remarkable sentence of *Tertullian's*, *Prescientia Dei tantos habet testes, quantos fecit prophetas.* Hence the learned *Episcopius* tells us, that his Religion and the reverence he had to the Divine Majesty would never suffer him to admit this argument, which reflected so much upon the truth of Divine Predictions.

But I answer more particularly, that Gods promises and threatnings are serious, because although God knows that some men who are threatned will continue in their wickedness, yet it being in their power to turn from their Sins, and the Divine threatning being an argument which should prevail upon men; no man can doubt but God is serious with sinners in such cases. If a parent did certainly know that his Son were to commit a criminal act, would any man think that that Parents threatning of

his Son, if he did commit that act, were void of ſincerity. But 2. As God knows that ſome wicked men, notwithſtanding of the ſevereſt threatning, will continue in their ſins: yet 1. He knows that even ſuch obdurate perſons may do otherwiſe, and 2. He knows that many men would have continued in their ſins, if they had not been threatned with puniſhments. We have no reaſon to think that the people of *Ninevie* would have turned unto God if they had never been threatned. Now though God knew that *Ninevie* when threatned would repent, yet ſince he alſo knew that if they had not been threatned they ſhould have continued in their wickedneſs; therefore no man can queſtion the ſerioufneſs of the Divine threatnings.

And thus I have diſpatched the firſt particular, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined. I come in the next place

place to enquire in what ſenſe it is not determined. Now becauſe I have already rejected the *Stoical* Fate, all that I ſhall ſpeak concerning this head may be comprehended in theſe following particulars: *viz.*

The Period of every Mans Life is not fatally limited and bounded by any abſolute or inconditionate decree of God Almighty. Now becauſe many learned men violently urge, that God hath from the outgoings of Eternity abſolutely decreed the bounds of every Mans Life, without any conſideration of thoſe circumſtances in which they are to be placed; ſo that men, do what they pleaſe, can neither extend nor ſhorten the leaſe of their life: I ſhall therefore endeavor to make this aſſertion plain, and remove thoſe objections that it may ſeem lyable to; and the rather, becauſe in ſuch kind of aſſertions as are beſides the common opinion, men will be ready to ſuſpect ſome ſiniſturous deſign. That

That the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatally determined by any secret inconditional decree, will appear from the arguments we shall make use of in proving the inability of the Period of every Mans Life. Now I shall only consider those absurdities and inconveniencies that follow upon the admission of the contrary opinion. As *first*, if the Period of Humane Life were Fatally determined, then those wretched miscreants who with their own hands put a Period to their Lives, may easily excuse themselves before their Judg: for since it is supposed that they are physically predetermined to do so, how can it be imagined that they could do otherwise? is there any resisting of the Divine decree? alas, it was not in their power to help it, and how then can they be condemned for it. It is a known Maxim, *Nemo peccat in eo quod vitare non potest:*

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The neceſſity they are placed in, ſeems to excuſe their ſin, but if notwithſtanding we ſhall ſuppoſe that ſuch brutiſh actions are really criminal, we run our ſelves upon another abſurdity, and that is, we reflect upon the Divine holineſs and goodneſs; for if God has truly determined thoſe brutiſh actions by a previous, ſecret, and unalterable decree, if he hath before irrevocably determined, and ſo intangled in ſuch a train of cauſes as ſhould neceſſarily make them offer violence to themſelves; how can we vindicate the Divine Sanctity from the blot of being the Author of ſin? Alas, dayly experience ſhews us, how apt Men are to make uſe of this argument for their own vindication, when they do what is criminal; they tell us they were fatally determined by an external power in acting them. And with this conſideration they ſolace themſelves, as if they were as innocent as Fools or Mad-Men. But

But let no Man deceive himſelf in arguing ſo fooliſhly, the Apoſtle St. *James*, very forcibly rejects this opinion. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed*, Jam. 2. 13, 14. The wiſe Man in his ſenſe, after the certainty of things, concludes his Seventh Chapter of the Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* thus, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: But they have ſought out many inventions.* Pray then let us reject every opinion that teacheth God does neceſſitate Men to ſin, for nothing can be more injurious to God than this. To think to palliat the buſineſs by ſaying God is under no Law, is but a Lawleſs and unreaſonable pretext; for the everlaſting rectitude of his ſpotleſs nature,

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is more than any external Law: and pray, what can truth and Juſtice do, but what is holy and juſt? The diſtinction between the act and the pravity of the act, the former of which God determins Man to, but not to the latter, is as vain and frivolous. For the pravity of every wicked act is inſeparable from it. And farther, the Divine commands particularly prohibit the act, and I think upon no other ground, but becauſe the formality of Sin conſiſts in the act it ſelf. It is indeed ſtrange to conſider thoſe Platonick and imaginary notions ſome Men run to: But I think it needleſs to take a particular view of ſuch Dreams.

But as this opinion ſadly reflects upon the holineſs of God, ſo it is highly inconſiſtent with the liberty of Mans Will in the choice of the means. That there is a free Principle in Man, is ſo plain, that he who denies this, muſt engage himſelf againſt

gainſt Experience and Reaſon. There is no Man who does wickedly, but he perceives he may do otherwiſe: the ſick man is not conſtrained to neglect the means for his recovery; neither is the Phyſitian forced to preſcribe this and no other remedy: Men act not as Machines, but they have a Free Principle, whereby they may chuſe what they think is beſt and moſt convenient: It's true, the Will, ſince *Adam*'s Fall, is corrupted, and moſtly enclined to that which is evil; but yet the Fall did not deſtroy Man's Freedom, it made no Phyſical change, only the Faculties of the Soul are morally vitiated and corrupted.

But if the Will were Phyſically (as they ſpeak) determined *ad unum*, it were unreaſonable to think that the Sick perſon, who neglects the means, could do otherwiſe. And alas! doth not Experience convince us, that Men of this perſwaſion neglect

lect the use of lawful means which God hath appointed, only because they Dream that if God has decreed that they shall dye, then it is needless to use the means; and if God has determined that they shall live, whether they use or neglect the means, they shall live.

But you'll say, God doth not only Decree the *End*, but also the *Means*. I answer, this Plea doth not a whit diminish or remove the difficulty, since they suppose that the Means are as absolutely decreed as the End: which quite destroys the liberty of Mans Will, and leaveth no place for any choice.

Thirdly, This opinion leaves no place for praise to the Learned Physitian, nor for dispraise to the unskilful Empyrick. First, The skilful Physitian can claim no praise; for although it be granted that he hath wisely considered the condition of the Sick, and the nature of the Disease; though he hath prescribed apt Reme-

Remedies, and in all things behaved well, yet since he did no other thing but what he was determined to do by an external force, who can think he merits any praise, if he could have done otherwise but would not, then he might in reason claim it; but the case according to the present *Hypothesis* is quite opposite. But, Secondly, neither can we in reason blame the unskilful *Quack-Doctor*, who neither knows the nature of the Disease, nor of those Medicines he prescribeth. Alas! poor man does no more than what he was forced to do, and he could not do otherwise; why then should he be blamed for any failure or mistake he commits.

Fourthly, The natural and genuine Consequence of this Doctrine, is, to make men like Fools or Mad-men, expose themselves to any danger: For instance, What need we be afraid to run upon any Precipice, if God hath determined the

the period of every man's life, there is no fear to encounter with any ſeeming danger; men may ſafely enough leap into the fire, or caſt themſelves into the deep, for there is no fear that they ſhall be hurt or periſh, unleſs the Almighty hath determined it; and if this be, they may perſwade themſelves they could not do otherwiſe, for the Decree is unalterable, and cannot be repealed.

Nor is this true only in Theory and Speculation, but it may appear to have ſuch bad effects, by the ſad experience of poor deluded Creatures. Alas! do we not hear the Vulgar frequently comfort any who are in trouble with this conſideration, that God hath decreed it ſhould be ſo, if theſe perſons did only mean that God exerciſeth a ſpecial Providence in the world, and ruleth among the Children of men, no body had ever blamed them: but this is not their meaning, for they

they plainly declare by such kind of speech, that all things come to pass fatally. I have heard some wretched Sinners, who had committed great and scandalous sins, excuse themselves, by saying, they were decreed to do so, and God's will must be accomplished.

It were very easie to multiply many Absurdities which flow from this Doctrine by a natural Consequence; but these few I have named may abundantly satisfie every considering man, and shew him how pernicious and dangerous it is; but before I conclude, I shall consider the four Arguments I mentioned before, which I said, seemed to strengthen and confirm this Opinion, as

First, *There are many places of Scripture which seem to conclude, That the Period of every Man's Life is determined.* I shall mention some of the most remarkable Texts of Scripture brought to defend this, as

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first, *Psal.* 31. 15. *My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine Enemies.* From hence some draw this unexpected Conclusion, That God hath absolutely decreed the Period of every Man's Life. Now I think no considering man should ever have guessed this to be the Psalmist's meaning; for the Text only holds out the Divine care and Providence, whereby he does superintend and continue every individual thing in the world in their Beings, and therefore is it that *David* makes his application to God, that he would deliver him from the hand of his Enemy; which methinks had been a needless Petition, if he had imagined that God had absolutely determined the period of his Life. Secondly, *Psal.* 39. 5. *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* This place is strangely brought to confirm the former Opinion: For the

Psalmist doth not desire the knowledge of the Period of his life; he does not ask when he shall die, only he begs the Divine aid and assistance, that he may wisely improve the short time he hath to live. I cannot stand to consider such Texts of Scripture as these, which are no ways acquainted with the Doctrin they are brought to defend. There is only one Text that seems to favor this Opinion, *viz.* Job 14. 5. *Seeing his Days are determined, the number of his Months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* But I have considered this all along in this Discourse. I confess, some in return to this say, that all *Job*'s words are not approved of God, therefore it is hard to conclude any thing from them; but this is a very insufficient answer. That which satisfieth me is this, that *Job* here only says that our days are determined, but he speaks nothing how they are determi-

termined; now in what ſenſe the Period of every Man's life may be ſaid to be determined, I have already conſidered.

Secondly, *There are many Examples in Scripture, which ſhew that the Period of every Man's Life is bounded and limited by an abſolute Decree.* The moſt remarkable is, that *Act.* 4. 28, *Both* Herod *and* Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles and the people of Iſrael were gathered together for to do whatſoever thy hand and thy counſel determined before to be done*: The Scribes and Phariſees frequently ſtirred up the multitude *to lay hands upon Chriſt*, but their endeavors were always to no purpoſe; and the account the Scripture gives for this, is, *becauſe his hour was not come.* In return to this, I ſhall deſire it may be conſidered, that when we ſay the Period of every Man's Life may be extended or ſhortned, the meaning is not, that it is impoſſible that it

can be otherwise: we never doubted but the great Governor of the World may make what reserved Cases he pleases from the ordinary course of things; and no wonder though the present Case, which is upon all accounts so extraordinary, be exempt from the general Rule; and for such exempt Cases, to which there ought to be allowance made, no reasonable man can think they do any prejudice to the thing I have been proving.

Thirdly, *It is a common opinion, that the futurition of things depend only upon the Divine will; antecedently to which things are only possible.* In answer to which, I easily grant, that there is nothing that comes to pass contrary to the Divine will; the most criminal actions are ordered by his Infinite Wisdom, and permitted to be. But yet we have no ground to think that he decrees every future action.

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Else it were hard to vindicate the holiness of God; upon which consideration many Learned Men have been induced to deny Gods immediate concurring with the Creature in all its operations; and yet we need not run our selves upon this Rock; for we may safely enough maintain that the Divine will is immediately efficatious; for God who created man with a freedom of will, designed that he should act without constraint, and the reason why man acts freely, is because God wills men to act so; which plainly discovers, that the most contingent actions depend immediatly upon the Divine will.

Fourthly, *We can never give a rational nor satisfying account how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the sure* Basis *of an absolute decree.* This objection I have partly removed already, while I shewed that

God knows whatsoever is true, because his cognisance is Infinite; wherefore it is unreasonable to think that God could not have a perfect comprehension of things, if he had not decreed them absolutely. Now to make this yet more plain, I shall prove by instances from Scripture, that God hath a certain knowledg of those things which he never decreed: as absolutely future. And *First*, It is a very remarkable instance which we have, 1. *Sam.* 23. 11, 12. where *David* hearing that *Saul* was to come to *Keilah*, he earnestly beseecheth God to tell him, if the men of *Keilah* will deliver him and his men into the hand of *Saul*, and if *Saul* will come down. To both which he gets this answer, *That Saul will come down*; and that *the Keilites will deliver him up*. And yet the Event shews that none of those came to pass, because the fulfilling of both did depend upon *David's* stay-

staying in *Keilah*. And yet God certainly knew, that if *David* had not departed from *Keilah*, they should have delivered him into the hands of *Saul*. And farther it is very evident, that *David* was not inquiring what were the present propensions, and inclinations of the *Keilites*, but what should be the event of his staying, and accordingly he receives an answer from God. Another Instance we have 2 *Kings*, 13. 19. where *Elisha* the Prophet is very wroth with *Joash* King of *Israel*, because he did not smite upon the ground five or six times; and the reason the Prophet adds, is, *for then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it*. Which makes it as evident as any thing can be, that God foreknew that *Joash* should have smitten *Syria* till he had consumed it, if he had smitten upon the ground five or six times. It were no difficult task to prove this by a multitude of instances from

Scripture, but I think I need add no more for the ſatisfaction of conſidering Men; and for others, a Million of demonſtrations will be urged to no purpoſe. And thus I have done with the Second thing I propoſed, that God hath not by any abſolute or inconditionate Decree fatally determined the Period of every Mans Life.

I proceed to the Third thing propoſed, namely, whether the Period of every Mans Life be mutable. And before I prove it to be ſo, I muſt premiſe two cautions. *Firſt*, when we ſay the Period of every Mans Life is mutable, we mean no more but that it may be ſhortned by our intemperance, or neglect of the means; and be extended by our good managery and religious manner of living. *Secondly*, When I ſay the Period of every Mans Life is moveable, the meaning is not that it is neceſſarily ſo, and that it cannot be otherwiſe; for this would not

not be consistent with our dependent condition; therefore there is allowance to be made to extraordinary cases. The acts of Divine providence in the government of Humane affairs, are sometimes extraordinary, and therefore it must be left to his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, to make what reserved cases he thinks fit from the general rule. Yet for ordinary the Period of Humane Life is mutable; and God doth not exclude the power of second causes in governing the World.

These things being premised, I doubt not but to offer such arguments for the proof of the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life, as shall be sufficient for the conviction of any man who is not blinded by prejudice, or prepossessed with some contrary notion. And

First, Upon the observance of the Divine laws, there are many promises in Scripture assuring us of

length

length of days; and on the other side, there are many threatnings of cuting short the days of the wicked. Thus God promises length of days to obedient Children. *Exod.* 20. 12. *Honor thy Father and Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* *Deut.* 4. 40. *Thou shalt keep therefore his Statutes and his Commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* And particularly the Lord tells *Solomon*, 1 *King.* 3. 4. *If thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my Statutes and my Commandments, as thy father* David *did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.* The Psalmist encourageth men to consider the case of the poor upon this Motive. *Psal.* 42. 1, 2. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, &c.* And upon this

this account the Wise-Man also perswadeth men to observe and keep Gods laws. *Prov.* 3. 1, 2. *My Son forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my Commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.*

How much the observance of the duties of Religion conduce to our health, is a thing daily experience attests; and therefore the Apostle very excellently exhorts *Timothy, to exercise himself unto Godliness, for it is profitable unto all things, having promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. Religion is as a bridle to keep men within due bounds in their eating and drinking; it forbids all manner of excess which impares our bodily health, and obliges men to make use of lawful means for their preservation and recovery. If we consult experience, we shall find these to be the men who for ordinary enjoy the longest lives: it

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is true some good men may be naturally of a brittle constitution, and others God may remove for secret ends known to himself; yet for ordinary, the Godly man, whose natural temper is strong, hath the advantage of the wicked man; and certainly Religion in its due tendency prescribes the best rules for long life.

As Righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil (as the Wise-Man tells us) *pursueth it to his own death*, Prov. 11. 19. We have a large Catalogue of the Punishments inflicted for sin, *Exod.* 28. Where more particularly *v.* 16. the Lord threatens to *appoint over those who obey not his Laws, terror, consumption, and the burning ague*: and that Men may not foolishly think all these are but threatnings which God intends not to inflict upon poor Man, the Prophet *Isaiah* tells us, *if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword*, for the Mouth

of

of the Lord hath ſpoken it. *Iſa.* 1. 20. And the wiſe-man concluds it as certain, *Prov.* 10. 27. *The years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned:* and to conclude, the Pſalmiſt alſo tells us, *bloody and deceitful men ſhall not live out half their days. Pſal.* 55. 23. which the Poet very well expreſſeth.

Ad Generum Cereris, ſine cæde ac ſanguine pauci,
Deſcendunt Reges, & ſicca morte Tyranni.

And the truth of this may be evident likewiſe from common Experience, by which it will appear, that no men are ſo obnoxious to Diſeaſes as the wicked, who ſpend their time *in chambering and wantonneſs, in riot and exceſs. Who hath woe? who hath ſorrow? who hath wounds without cauſe? they that tarry long at the wine,* Prov. 23. 29, 30. What the Wiſe-man ſays of one kind of Vice, may be ſaid of all, *They lead down to the Chambers of death,*

death, Prov. 7. 27. But these things are so obvious, that I need not to enlarge upon them. I shall conclude this Argument with this consideration, that since God Almighty promises to extend and lengthen out, or prolong their life who walk piously and observe his Statutes, and threatens to shorten the days of the wicked, who refuse to obey his Laws, it cannot be rationally imagined that the Period of every Man's Life is absolutely determined.

Another Argument to confirm our Assertion, may be taken from the pious and devout prayers of the righteous, and their turning from their sins by an hearty repentance; both which conduce to the lengthening out of their days. I put Repentance and Prayer together, because of their near affinity to one another. Now that both these may be the Moral Cause of extending our Lives, may appear to be

true

true from common Experience, beſides the many Aſſertions and Promiſes in Scripture to this purpoſe. Firſt, The truth of this may be evident from Experience, by which it will appear, that if Men had hearkned to *Noah*'s Doctrin, if they had repented of their wickedneſs within the ſpace allowed to them, they had not periſhed in the Deluge of Water. Of repenting *Nineveh* we read, *That God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah 3. 10. It was *Hezekiah*'s Prayers and Tears that prolonged his life. *Go* (ſaith the Lord to his Prophet *Iſaiah*) *and ſay to Hezekiah, Thus ſaith the Lord, the God of David thy Father, I have ſeen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years*, Iſa. 38. 5. And if Prayer were of no force, to what purpoſe were men ſo earneſt in their ſickneſs, to beg the

prayers

prayers of others on their behalf. I confeſs if the Period of every Mans Life were fatally determined, our Prayers ſhould be very needleſs. For can we be ſo ſenſleſs as to imagine, that our Prayers can move God to change his unalterable Statutes and Decrees.

But beſides common experience, the truth of this is likewiſe atteſted by plain evidences from Scripture. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a kingdom to plant it; If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them.* Jer. 18. 7, 8, 9, 10. Methinks this is ſo plain an evidence of the efficacy of repentance, that no reaſonable

nable man can have any doubt concerning it. But alas, if God had from the outgoings of Eternity fatally determined the destruction of Nations and Kingdoms by an absolute and inconditionate decree, Repentance could never alter the determination.

It is the Apostles advice *Jam.* 5. 14. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him.* I know there are other means to be made use of in order to the procuring of health than repentance and prayer, and of these we shall speak anon: but yet this I think may be truly said, that sometimes, when all other remedies have been either ineffectual or not to be had, repentance and prayer have done the business, and compleated the cure. And surely these are duties profitable at all times.

I know the Church of *Rome* tell us many extravagant Stories of the

wonders and miracles that have been performed by the prayers of Holy Men: those I shall not now mention, only I shall say, that although it is not credible that the Prayers of Saints upon the Earth, do either mitigate and alleviate the pains of those that are in Hell; or free them from that miserable state, (as some men have confidently enough reported:) yet it is sufficiently credible that *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*, Jam. 5. 16.

A *Third* Argument to prove that our lives may be extended or shortned, may be taken from the use of medicaments. Common reason will teach Men, that it is needless to prescribe any Medicine to those that are dead; and truly the case would be much alike, if the Period of every Mans Life were determined by an inconditionate Decree. For although men might then make use of medicaments, yet I think

think I may truly ſay that their operation ſhould be very ineffectual. But that men may to good purpoſe employ the Phyſitian when they are ſick, and expect by the bleſſing of God, benefit by the uſe of Medicaments applied by the art of Phyſick, no reaſonable man can doubt.

That the lives of many have been lengthned and prolonged by the excellent remedies, applied by the expert and skilful Phyſitian, is a truth ſo obvious to common experience, that I need not enlarge upon it. And on the other ſide, how many have died before their time, only by their imploying ignorant Phyſitians! It is a famous inſtance that we have recorded of one *Manes*, the Father of the *Manichees*, who having returned into *Perſia* at that time when the Kings Son lay ſick of a dangerous diſeaſe, he amongſt many other Phyſitians was preſent: all the others plainly declared that the diſeaſe was

dangerous; but *Manes*, who was only a pretended Physitian, confidently desired that they might be all removed, and he would take care of the Kings Son, and withal promised to restore him to health in a short space; but the event was quite contrary, for within a short time the Kings Son died; which did so provoke the King of *Persia*, that he instantly caused *Manes* to be put to a miserable Death. What mischief has been done by unskilful Physitians, too many sad examples do daily attest; but yet if the Period of every Mans Life were determin'd by an absolute and inconditionate decree, no man could blame the ignorant Physitian, nor needs any person be troubled if they neglect the means; for God had determined they should do so. which indeed makes *Martha* speech to our Lord Christ to be ridiculous, *if thou hadst been here my Brother had not died.*

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That *Naaman* the *Syrian* should waſh himſelf in the River of *Jordan* ſeven times, and then be clean of his Leproſie, was indeed miraculous: But yet it is plain, that if he had not done ſo, his Leproſie had remained.

Whether that cuſtom in the primitive Chriſtian Church of anointing the ſick with Oyl was miraculous, or not, I ſhall not diſpute; but this is certain, that it was then a means uſed for the recovery of the Sick.

There is one objection which ſome men very impertinently urge againſt what I have been ſpeaking, and that is, *Aſa* his going to the Phyſitians, which the Scripture ſeems to diſallow. To this I anſwer, that King *Aſa* is not therefore reprehended, becauſe he asked advice of the Phyſitians, but becauſe he truſted only in them, and *ſought not the Lord*: as it is very plain from 2 *Chron.* 16.12. And ſure no reaſona-

ble man will have any doubt but this was a very culpable neglect in *Asa*.

Fourthly, Nothing is more evident than that there are several things which have a Physical efficacy in the shortning of Mens lives, as all kinds of excess, namely immoderate eating and drinking; all inordinate passions of mind, *&c.* as also the bad and unwholesome constitution of a Kingdom. And on the other side, there are many things which effectually conduce to the lengthning of our days; namely all kind of moderation and temperance; the wholsomness of the region wherein we live, and our good managery. What kind of persons are those who for ordinary live longest? are they not those who carefully moderate their sensual appetites, and who govern their passions, and who live in the wholesomest places? We commonly say that Men who live in a Populous

pulous City are ſhorter lived than thoſe who live in the Country. I have already ſhewed how ſome vices in their proper tendency ſhorten Mens Lives, and that in ſome Nations and Kingdoms men live much longer than in others: all which methinks plainly tells us the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatal but Mutable, according as men are careful or negligent of themſelves.

I ſhall only add another conſiderable argument, and ſo draw this diſcourſe to a concluſion. And that is, don't we evidently perceive that many men had lived longer if they had not wretchedly and unreaſonably expoſed themſelves to danger; and is it not evident that many Millions who have died in battle would have had their days prolonged if they had never deſcended into battle? That God hath from the outgoings of Eternity by an abſolute and inconditionate decree de-

termined both the time and manner of of every mans death, this is more than we can learn from Revelation; and methinks it is very inconsistent and irreconcilable with those many plain texts that shew it is lawful in time of eminent danger to flee for our safety, in time of Famine, and when any egregious contagion, such as the Pestilence, spreadeth in any place. How many Hundreds prolonged their lives by their flight from battle? If *David* and his Men had remained in *Keilah* it is certain they should have been delivered up into the hands of *Saul*; and what the Event should have been we may easily conjecture, if God by a special providence had not interposed for their safety. But, besides the many instances we might produce, we have a positive precept to flee from any eminent danger, *Mat.* 10. 23. *when they persecute you in this City flee into another.* Which plainly shews that this

this is a lawful means of prolonging our lives in such cases. It is a notable instance we have, *Jer.* 27. 18. *Thus saith the Lord, behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death: he that abideth in this City shall dye by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Pestilence: but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.* Which place plainly shews, that God had not decreed the Period of their Lives by any inconditionate decree; for the means both of prolonging and of cutting short their Lives, are put in their choice. And this is all that I shall say to the *Third* thing I proposed to speak, concerning the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life for ordinary.

All that now remains is to conclude with some practical reflections upon what hath been said. And *first*, whatever debates there may

may be concerning the Period of every Mans Life, yet there is no doubt but Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*, and from this warefare there is no discharge. Pray what is become of all those who lived in former ages? have they not gone the way of all living? and shall we think to shun the approach of this last Enemy, may not the multiplied experiences we have of other Mens frailty and mortality, convince us that we are brittle, and must return to the dust? we are of the like constitution that they were of, and we cannot expect to be otherwise dealt with. *What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?* and yet many men live as unconcerned as if they had the perpetuity of their beings ensured to them and had *concluded an agreement with Death*, and had *secret intelligence with the Grave*.

It is truly a business worthy to be regrated that men who are living,

ing, as it were in the Houſe of mourning, daily viſited with pains and diſeaſes, and have no promiſe, at leaſt, for one moments ſecurity, yet live unconcerned and never mind thoſe pleaſures. It was indeed a praiſe worthy and commendable cuſtom amongſt the *Jews*, to build their Sepulchers in their Gardens (as we may gueſs from *Joh.* 19. 41.) that ſo in the midſt of their pleaſures, they might behold Monuments of their mortality.

Truly if we did frequently meditate upon our latter end, we ſhould live more like Chriſtians than we now do. The *end* hath a very great influence upon mens endeavors; hence is that general *Maxim*, *Finis ultimus præſcribat regulas totius vitæ.* And it ſeems that the Pſalmiſt upon this account prays, *Lord make me know mine end, and the meaſure of my days, that I may know how frail I am.* It is not to be doubted

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but we ſhould order our converſation aright, If we had this conſideration in our view. We ſhould have but low and contemptible thoughts of the periſhing pleaſures which we now ſo much delight in. Then we ſhould be argued out of our folly in ſpending our years as a tale that is told.

It is threatned a ſad Plague to the oppreſſor, *that the number of his years are hidden from him*, Job. 15. 20. He is a perſon that never conſiders that his appointed time approacheth, and that God will bring him into the Grave, the place appointed for all living: and it is laid down as the cauſe why *Jeruſalem came down wonderfully*, that *ſhe remembred not her laſt end.* Lam. 1. 9. And truly it may be alſo reckoned as the cauſe why Chriſtians live ſo contrary to the commendable rules of the Goſpel they profeſs. If we did but entertain ſomewhat more familiar

familiar thoughts of our appointed time, we could not but rectify thoſe abuſes we are guilty of. But alas, all the paſſages of our time are filled up with cares about things that periſh: we can walk to the Grave with our friends, whom we once loved as intirely as our own lives, and reap as little advantage by their death as if we had never been acquainted with them, never remembring, *that we muſt go to them but they cannot return to us.*

But *Secondly*, although the Period of every Mans Life is fixed in reſpect of the Divine foreknowledg, yet to us it is uncertain; we know not when this Enemy may ſurpriſe us. Of this we may ſay what our Lord Chriſt ſaith of the day of judgment, *but of that day and hour we know not.* When we leaſt ſuſpect its approach it may call us to go hence and be no more. How many millions of ſtrange and unexpected accidents attend us?

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the Peſtilence walketh in darkneſs, and Deſtruction waſteth at noon-day, aſtoniſhing diſpenſations may allarm us by night, and the devouring Arrow fleeth by day, *Pſal.* 91, 5. 6. When we go abroad, we cannot promiſe to our ſelves a ſafe return, and at home when we put off our cloths, we cannot tell if we ſhall ever put them on again: the Grave is always ready for us. What ſtrange kind of unknown diſeaſes doth our age produce, from which we cannot promiſe to our ſelves any exemption? We live amongſt cruel and mad Men, and do we know but thoſe Beaſts of prey may devour us? When we look for peace, deſtruction may come. This was the Rich Mans Fate, who while he was promiſing himſelf reſt for many days, *that ſame night his Soul was required of him.* We are always apt to put the thoughts of this day far from us; when we

we enjoy health we never think of any change, and that ſickneſs may ſeize upon us and put a Period to our lives. We live indeed at a great deal of uncertainty; *man alſo knoweth not his time, as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the ſnare: ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them,* Eccl. 9. 12. We look upon Death as the unfaithful Servant did upon his Maſters coming, we think Death doth *delay its coming*; but if we were not fools we ſhould always realize the quickneſs of its approach. May be we are young and ſtrong, how many ſuch have been called away in the morning of their age? *Goo too now* (ſaith the Apoſtle *James*) *ye that ſay to day or to morrow we will go into ſuch a City and continue there a year, and buy and ſell and get gain; whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow,* Jam. 4. 13. 14. Alas our

our days at beſt are but labor and ſorrow, for they are ſoon cut off, and we flee away. When a few years are gone, Wee muſt go the way of all fleſh: and yet upon the happy improvement of this depends our everlaſting happineſs or miſery; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledg, nor wiſdom, in the Grave whither we are going*, Eccl. 9 10.

F I N I S.

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